

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9646
INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 0476

DEPT PASS USAID AND USDA

RABAT FOR AGATT KUHL

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID, EAGR, OVIP, TS
SUBJ: FARMER'S UNION PRESIDENT ASKS HELP TO MEET FEED SHORTAGE
THREATENING SHEEP AND CATTLE HERDS

REF: TUNIS 375, STATE 8593

1. (SUAMMARY) IN MEETING JANUARY 10 WITH CONGRESSMAN DAVID R. BOWEN AND E/C COUNSELOR, TUNISIAN FARMERU'S UNION PRESIDENT MOHANED GHEDIRA ASKED IF USG COULD HELP TO MEET SERIOUS DROUGHT-CAUSED SHORTAGE OF EED WHICH DEBILITATING TUNISIAN LIVE-STOCK, FORCING MAJOR LIQUIDATION OF HERDS, AND ALTOGETHER THREATENING MASSIVE LOSS. CONGRESSMAN BOWEN ENCOURAGED EMBASSY TO INQUIRE AS TO POSSIBLE AVAILABILITY UNDER TITLE I OF FEED ITEMS SUCH AS CUBED OR PELLEDED ALFALFA AND SOYA MEAL. DESPITE SOME RECENT RAINS, FORAGE SITUATION HERE CONTINUES TO BE GRAVE (TUNIS 375) AND TIME IS OF ESSENCE IF HELP IS TO BE EFFECTIVE. ACTION REQUESTED: WE WOULD APPRECIATE PROMPT ADVICE AS TO POSSIBILITY OF PROVIDING FORAGE COMMODITIES UNDER TITLE I TO HELP
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SAVE BREEDING STOCK. ALSO ASK PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATION OF ADDITIONAL FEED GRAINS UNDER TITLE I. (END SUMMARY)

2. E/C COUNSELOR POINTED OUT TO GHEDIRA THAT TITLE II GRANT ASSISTANCE IS LIMITED TO FOOD FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION AND INDICATED THAT SIGNIFICANT QUANTITY OF FEED GRAINS ARE INCLUDED IN PROSPECTIVE TITLE I

PROGRAM. ALSO NOTED USG COULD ONLY ACT ON FORMAL REQUEST THROUGH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. CONGRESSMAN BOWEN AND E/C COUNSELOR DID NOT ENCOURAGE EXPECTATIONS ON PROSPECTS FOR FORAGE CONCENTRATIONS

OR LARGER FEEDGRAINS UNDER TITLE I BUT, CONVINCED OF SERIOUSNESS OF SITUATION, UNDERTOOK TO INFORM GHEDIRA ON QUESTION OF COMMODITY AVAILABILITY.

3. LATER, TOP GHEDIRA AIDE AND MEMBER OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ABDERRAHMAN TOUKABRI PROVIDED DATA ON LIVESTOCK POPULATION AND DETAILS REGARDING PRESENT EMERGENCY IN FORM OF MEMORANDUM ON "FOOD SAFEGUARD MEASURES FOR LIVESTOCK" APPARENTLY PREPARED BY UNA AS PROPOSAL TO GOT TO SAVE IMPORTANT FRACTION OF BREEDING STOCK AND MILK COWS. (TOTAL CATTLE POPULATION OVER 900 THOUSAND, TOTAL SHEEP POPULATION NEARLY 6 MILLION.) INFORMAL TRANSLATION FOLLOWS:

4. BEGIN QUOTE "FORAGE DEFICIT HAS PERSISTED AND INCREASED WITH EACH DROUGHT DESPITE MEASURES TO DEVELOP FORAGE RESOURCES. IN COURSE OF 1977 KEY ELEMENTS OF LIVESTOCK POPULATION--COWS/PREGNANT HEIFERS AND EWES--REACHED TOTALS OF 481,000 AND 4 MILLION, RESPECTIVELY. THIS INCREASE SERVED TO ACCENTUATE PROBLEM OF ANIMAL FEED IN YEAR CHARACTERIZED BY LONG TERM DROUGHT, STARTING LAST FEBRUARY, WHICH HAS BROUGHT NET DECREASE IN FORAGE AND CEREAL CROPS AND CONSEQUENTLY LOW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRODUCTION OF STRAW AND HAY.

. PRODUCTION OF HAY IN 1977 WAS 300,000 TONS, COMPARED WITH AVERAGE ANNUAL PRODUCTION OF 400,000 TONS; PRODUCTION OF STRAW DECREASED AT LEAST 50 PERCENT. APART FROM THE NEGATIVE EFFECT OF DROUGHT ON CULTIVATED DRY FORAGE, PASTURES HAVE BEEN SEVERELY AFFECTED, LEADING TO EXHAUSTION OF FEED GRAIN STOCKS WHICH HAD BEEN AT LEVEL WELL BELOW THAT OF PREVIOUS YEARS.

6. IN THIS SITUATION, EXCEPTIONAL MEASURES HAVE BEEN TAKEN WITH VIEW TO SUPPLYING REGIONS MOST AFFECTED WITH CONCENTRATE, BARLEY AND BRAN RESIDUE IN QUANTITIES DOUBLE NORMAL LEVELS. NEVERTHELESS, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT PERSISTENCE OF DROUGHT, IT CLEARLY IS NECESSARY TO FOLLOW-UP AND REINFORCE THIS ACTION WITH IMPORTATION OF BARLEY, AND HAY CONCENTRATE (DUBED ALFALFA). IMPORTATION OF HAY WOULD BE HARD TO ENVISAGE IN VIEW OF DIFFICULTY OF FINDING LARGE QUANTITIES FROM SINGLE SUPPLIERS AND VERY HIGH COST, AS WELL AS TRANSPORT AND DELIVERY CONSTRAINTS.

7. TAKING ACCOUNT OF CRITICAL STATE OF LIVESTOCK OUTSIDE OF IRRIGATED AREAS AND LACK OF FORAGE RESOURCES IN OTHER ZONES,

IT WOULD BE ESSENTIAL TO REACH AT LEAST 100,000 COWS AND ONE MILLION EWES, FOR WHICH TWO MONTHS REQUIREMENTS CAN BE ESTIMATED AS FOLLOWS:

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 0476

DEPT PASS USAID AND USDA

RABAT FOR AGATT KUHL

SHEEP: OPTION I: BARLEY: ONE MILLION HEAD X 300 GRAMS PER DAY X 60 DAYS EQUALS 18,000 TONS. OPTION II: BARLEY PLUS CONCENTRATED FORAGE: ONE MILLION HEAD X 150 GRAMS PER DAY OF BARLEY X 60 DAYS EQUALS 9,000 TONS. ONE MILLION HEAD X 200 GRAMS PER DAY OF CUBES X 60 DAYS EQUALS 12,000 TONS.

CATTLE: 100,000 COWS X 5 KILLOGRAMS PER DAY OF CUBES X 60 DAYS EQUALS 30,000 TONS. TOTAL COST OF FIRST OPTION WOULD BE 3.06 MILLION DINARS: 310,000 DINARS FOR BARLEY PLUS 2.25 MILLION DINARS FOR CUBED FORAGE. COST OF SECOND OPTION WOULD BE 3.465 MILLION DINARS: 2.925 MILLION DINARS FOR CUBED FORAGE PLUS 540,000 DINARS FOR BARLEY.

8. DESPITE HIGHER COST OF SECOND OPTION, IT IS PREFERABLE SINCE IT IS BASED ON CONDENSED FORAGE, BULK FOOD NECESSARY FOR RUMINANTS, WHICH NOW IS PRACTICALLY NON-EXISTENT. STILL TO BE DETERMINED ARE QUESTIONS OF RESALE PRICE AND ALSO OF FINANCING FOR THE ROUGHLY 3 MILLION DINAR PROGRAM WHICH, BY DEFINITION, WOULD HAVE TO BE IN PART SUBSIDIZED. END QUOTE
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9. SINCE DRAFTING THE ABOVE, WE HAVE LEARNED: (A) OFFICE OF CEREALS HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO INITIATE PROCUREMENT PROGRAM SIMILAR TO BUT LARGER THAN OPTION II OUTLINED IN PARAGRAPHS 7 AND 8. TO SPEED DELIVERY, INITIAL PURCHASE OF 7,000 TONS OF ALFALFA PELLETS AND 3,000 TONS OF HAY HAS BEEN MADE IN EUROPE. OFFICE INDICATES BALANCE TO BE PROCURED IS 33,000 TONS OF PELLETS OR CUBES, 7,000 TONS OF HAY, PLUS 40,000 TONS OF BARLEY. METHOD OF FINANCING FOR SUBSIDIZED RESALE (SUBSIDY ELEMENT ESTIMATED AT \$12.2 MILLION⁹ NOT YET DETERMINED BUT APPROACHED HAS BEEN MADE TO FRENCH GOVERNMENT TO HELP BY PROVIDING QUANTITY OF FORAGE BELOW COST. (B) EXCHANGE OF TELEX TRAFFIC HAS COME TO OUR ATTENTION REFLECTING APPROACH BY AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN WILLIAM AOSSEY TO IOWA GOVERNOR AND CONGRESSMEN REGARDING POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE TO TUNISIA IN FORM OF FORAGE CONCENTRATES AND MILLETS. LATTER REPORTEDLY SAID THEY WOULD "LOOK INTO" POSSIBILITIES OF PL-480. JANUARY 17 COMMUNICATION CITES AOSSEY DISCUSSION WITH GEORGE OPE OF USDA ON PENDING TITLE I SALES AGREEMENT (INCLUDING 25,000 TONS OF FEEDGRAINS) AND POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER ANIMAL FEED ASSISTANCE.

10. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE ADVICE ON TITLE I COMMODITY AVAILABILITY OF FORAGE CONCENTRATES UNDER TITLE I PROGRAM. IF SUCH COMMODITIES ARE AVAILABLE OR THERE IS POSSIBILITY OF ADDITIONAL FEED GRAIN ALLOCATION IN FY 1978, EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATION BY WASHINGTON AGENCIES OF POSSIBLE EMERGENCY HELP TO MAINTAIN CRITICAL POPULATION OF BREEDING STOCK AND MILK PRODUCERS IN TUNISIA. ANYTHING WE COULD DO TO SUPPORT GOT EFFORTS IN RESPONDING TO CRITICAL AGRICULTURAL SITUATION, BY OURSELVES RESPONDING TO THIS APPEAL, WOULD BE HELPFUL. MEANWHILE, WE INTEND TO EMPHASIZE PROSPECTIVE NEW TITLE I AGREEMENT (STATE 8593) AS RESPONSIVE TO CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF 1977 DROUGHT, INCLUDING LIVESTOCK PROBLEM.
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